

# **USAID support to the CAMPFIRE program in Zimbabwe**

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CAMPFIRE strives to harmonize the needs of people and natural resources, including wildlife, so both can prosper well into the next century. The program was established by Zimbabweans in the mid-1980s; USAID support began in 1989 and averages approximately \$3 million a year. CAMPFIRE is generally considered a conservation and development success story. As with any complex development initiative, there are aspects to the program which need to be improved.

Since the program's inception, poaching has been greatly reduced, land dedicated to conservation has more than doubled, and the elephant population has increased significantly. Equally important, poor rural Zimbabweans have benefited financially from natural resources management activities, thereby improving the quality of their lives.

CAMPFIRE is a powerful vehicle for strengthening grassroots democracy in Zimbabwe, as communities and rural district councils decide how best to utilize their natural resources in a sustainable way. Villagers meet to decide which activities to engage in, and how proceeds will be used or distributed.

Zimbabwe's challenge, which CAMPFIRE addresses, is the historical displacement of most of the indigenous rural population to lands less productive for traditional agriculture and more fragile environmentally. In these areas of the country, community-based natural resources management provides a real opportunity for economic growth.

CAMPFIRE communities are amongst the poorest in Zimbabwe; in target communities, average annual per capita income is often less than \$35. CAMPFIRE provides a valuable source of additional income through various activities, including eco-tourism, forestry, fisheries, and limited sport hunting. Less than one-third of CAMPFIRE communities engage in sport hunting.

As in the United States, hunting is legal in Zimbabwe and controlled by the Government. In Zimbabwe, the elephant is neither threatened nor endangered. There is now a robust elephant population of over 66,000 in Zimbabwe, with about 3,000 new births each year. Some animal rights groups have opposed CAMPFIRE because some communities opt to allow limited, legal hunting. However, USAID does not subsidize or directly support sport hunting.

Formerly, hunting rights were granted exclusively to commercial farmers living on privately-held land. Under CAMPFIRE, similar rights have been extended to rural populations, living on communal land. The Zimbabwean Government grants hunting concessions based on the herd size and the land's carrying capacity. Hunters pay from \$10,000 to \$15,000 for an elephant-hunting license. Approximately 100 such hunting licenses were granted by CAMPFIRE communities last year. (Two to three times as many hunting licenses are granted in non-CAMPFIRE areas, and about

70 to 90 "problem" elephants are killed each year for endangering families and crops.)

Over a million poor rural Zimbabweans roughly ten percent of the total population have benefited from CAMPFIRE. Communities have used CAMPFIRE proceeds, including hunting fees, to build schools, health clinics, grinding mills, and wildlife fences; to establish scholarship funds and women's clubs; to maintain wells and purchase farming tools and equipment.

USAID is committed to learning lessons from the program's implementation to date, and to doing our utmost to maximize the program's impact in Zimbabwe. We look forward to continued dialogue with Congress on this important endeavor.

## **Overview**

USAID regularly evaluates ongoing programs to improve development impact. A recently conducted external evaluation found that CAMPFIRE was quite successful both in increasing household revenue and in maintaining wildlife populations in districts with abundant wildlife. CAMPFIRE has not led to increased poaching or to an unsustainable depletion of wildlife; on the contrary, there is evidence that populations of large mammals, including elephants, are increasing in CAMPFIRE areas.

CAMPFIRE is developing alternative land uses for Districts with and without abundant wildlife, including tourism, the extraction of high value wild flora, and the exploitation of mineral resources. All of these alternatives have risks and require significant time and effort to enable CAMPFIRE communities to expand to a more diversified and sustained stream of revenue.

CAMPFIRE's goal is to empower communities, by providing sustainable economic benefits to Rural District Councils, wards, villages and households. It is clear that in some districts more needs to be done to ensure that benefits have an impact at the household level. Most communities elect to pool resources to finance infrastructure, such as schools or health clinics, which has a positive impact on the community, especially children. In some cases, revenues are distributed to individual households. It should be noted that community residents decide whether proceeds will be pooled or given to households, and when given directly to households, even modest proceeds can be significant in remote rural areas.

An equally important goal of the program is to help protect the natural resources of Zimbabwe, especially elephants. Wildlife censuses and habitat surveys indicate that this goal is being met. By giving rural people a vested interest in the long-term survival of wildlife, progress is being made. Nevertheless, because of the contribution of sport hunting revenues to CAMPFIRE, questions have been raised about the appropriateness of USAID support, despite the fact that no United States assistance directly supports sport hunting.

At present, there are few alternatives to hunting which can quickly generate significant revenue. Other forms of natural resource management which could, in the long run, yield potentially sizeable revenues will require time and significant infrastructure investments. Our most recent information makes clear that even in areas where CAMPFIRE has been successful more work needs to be done if the successes highlighted above are to be maintained and the wildlife population sustained over the long term.

Does the CAMPFIRE program have areas of concern that need to be addressed? Certainly, minimal levels of revenue distribution to households and increased local control over natural resources are examples of the types of issues which require continued attention in a program of this complexity and scope.

## **Background**

In the mid-1980s, Zimbabwe's Department of National Parks and Wildlife Management (DNPWLM) teamed with social scientists from the University of Zimbabwe Centre for Applied Social Sciences (CASS) to establish CAMPFIRE. CAMPFIRE brings people and natural resources

together and provides an alternative to the conversion and degradation of wildlife habitats to unsustainable agriculture. It was designed to address the inevitable conflict between people and wildlife that share the same land in a way which would address the needs of both in a sustainable manner.

By involving local populations as partners in conservation, CAMPFIRE is both an approach and a program; it weds local empowerment to the rewards of sustainable use of the natural resource base. It is founded on the premise that benefits must exceed the perceived costs of managing the resource and must be secure over time.

Where CAMPFIRE has taken hold, there have been discernible results: a re-awakened appreciation of wildlife; poaching eliminated or drastically reduced; fewer complaints of problem animals; the emergence of local environmental management structures; improved environmental conservation practices; increased food security in times of drought; the local initiation of land-use planning; increased household revenues; and community funded schools, clinics, grinding mills and other infrastructure. By empowering communities to take charge of their own development needs, CAMPFIRE has improved the quality of life, and the surrounding environment, for some of the poorest segments of Zimbabwean society.

### **Issue 1: Steps taken to implement the CAMPFIRE program**

CAMPFIRE is a Zimbabwean creation, implemented by a coalition of local conservation and development partners both inside and outside of government. The CAMPFIRE Association of Rural Districts Councils (RDCs) occupies a lead role in this coalition.

CAMPFIRE operates in the communal areas of rural Zimbabwe. The initial focus of the program was to redirect sport hunting revenues from the national treasury to local government in two rural districts, Nyaminyami and Guruve. With the support of the Zimbabwean government and many international donors, the program has expanded to include income-generating conservation-based initiatives involving diverse resources; and it has expanded to 36 districts. USAID, via its Natural Resources Management Project (NRMP I and II), is the largest external source of support for CAMPFIRE.

USAID initially became involved in CAMPFIRE in 1989-1994 through a program called "Natural Resources Management Project (NRMP I)", which included three local partners: the Zimbabwe Department of National Parks and Wildlife Management (DNPWLM), the University of Zimbabwe Centre for Applied Social Sciences (CASS) and a local non-governmental organization called Zimbabwe Trust. The project initially provided capacity building support to four rural districts in wildlife rich areas in Matabeleland (Binga, Tsholotsho, Bulilima-Mangwe, and Hwange). This pilot effort enabled a broader application of CAMPFIRE principles which had first been tested elsewhere in the country.

Total funding for CAMPFIRE under NRMP I was \$7.6 million. Based on the promising results in rural empowerment, income re-distribution and wildlife enhancement achieved in this pilot effort, USAID expanded its assistance to CAMPFIRE under NRMP II, beginning in September 1994, adding \$20.5 million over five years, including \$16 million in bilateral funds. The program was expanded in order to extend this pilot experience to provide wildlife and organizational management capacity to Rural District Councils nationwide.

The CAMPFIRE Association's long-term plan emphasizes the extension of CAMPFIRE principles to resources beyond wildlife. The CAMPFIRE Association is actively engaged in diversification of resource management strategies to enhance benefits accruing to its membership. This initiative is still in its early stages, largely represented by planning efforts, feasibility studies, and pilot programs at the field level. The Zimbabwean Government has recently reaffirmed its commitment to expanding CAMPFIRE's mandate to include forest and mineral resources. These initial efforts appear to have given CAMPFIRE strong momentum towards the generation of revenue streams that are not dependent on hunting.

Membership in the CAMPFIRE Collaborative Group has been extended to include the Government's Forestry Commission, the Department of Natural Resources of the Ministry of Mines, Environment and Tourism, and SAFIRE (Southern Alliance for Indigenous Resources). SAFIRE is a Zimbabwean non-governmental organization dedicated to rural self-sufficiency through the improved management of natural resources. Its major focus has been to build on the achievements of CAMPFIRE, and to promote economic development in communal areas based on sustainable and productive use of natural resources, with an emphasis on woodlands and trees.

Finally, the Government of Zimbabwe is working on comprehensive environmental law reforms to ensure sound environmental management. The government's goal is to create a conducive legal and regulatory environment for communities to manage their natural resources effectively and to benefit from such actions.

## **Issue 2: Impact of the program on the people and wildlife of CAMPFIRE districts**

Although some activities, such as environmental education, wildlife census and policy dialogue, are implemented at a national level, CAMPFIRE continues to concentrate on the communal areas where agricultural potential is limited and poverty is widespread. CAMPFIRE is currently active in 36 of Zimbabwe's 57 rural districts (See map, Annex I). The program has expanded out from its origins in Guruve and Nyaminyami to include large expanses of the Mid and Lower Zambezi, Southeast Lowveld, Matabeleland, and Eastern Highland regions of the country. The number of local communities participating in CAMPFIRE has increased to the present level of more than 185 wards, translating to more than 200,000 households and over one million people.

As CAMPFIRE has expanded geographically, it has also diversified beyond its predominant wildlife focus to include other forest and savannah products, fisheries and non-consumptive eco-tourism. Through this evaluation, increasing numbers of people, the environment, and wildlife populations throughout Zimbabwe have reaped tangible benefits.

In response to these various interventions, CAMPFIRE residents have reduced tree-cutting and annual burning of grazing lands in order to improve the quality of wildlife habitat. CAMPFIRE's community development NGO, Zimbabwe Trust, reports that many communities have adopted and are implementing by-laws which impose fines upon residents who persist in such environmentally destructive activities.

The Department of National Parks, which is responsible for training CAMPFIRE-area residents as game scouts, reports that these individuals have worked effectively to prevent poaching and assisted in wildlife management within their respective areas.

CAMPFIRE revenues, returned to communities as dividends (52% of total revenues in 1996), are used to underwrite a variety of development projects such as wells, schools, health clinics, grinding mills, game fences, roads and bridges, selected by community members in public fora. In some cases, community members have chosen to receive their benefits in cash, as a household dividend payment. These conservation-based development activities and cash payments have directly contributed to new, more positive attitudes towards wildlife, which are now viewed as an economic resource, not as pests.

In addition to community development funds, another 15-35% of program revenues is spent at the local level by participating Rural District Councils for infrastructure improvements and ongoing operations and maintenance, generating significant additional local employment benefits (e.g., fence menders, game scouts, and resource monitors).

The majority of revenue received by Rural District Councils and distributed to wards and villages is derived from contracts signed with safari operators. Safari operators pay the council a fee to bring in clients on Council-managed lands, usually in areas bordering National Parks and Reserves.

Since CAMPFIRE began in 1989, total revenue accruing to all Districts has risen from an initial

\$650,000 in 1989 to \$1,253,405 in 1996. Over the eight years for which data are available, CAMPFIRE districts have earned \$8,100,000. Three districts Binga, Nyaminyami and Guruve (all in the Zambezi valley) have each generated over \$1 million since 1989.

Wildlife habitat has increased communal land areas continue to be set aside for CAMPFIRE management. In Nyaminyami District, the governing Council formally established a wildlife sanctuary at Bumi Hills where wildlife enjoys protection. The Nyaminyami District Council designated the Mapangolas Hills a conservation area in order to create a wildlife corridor between Matusadona and Chizarira National Parks. Wildlife has been reintroduced into several "depleted" areas surrounding Hwange National Park and efforts are underway to relocate a variety of species from over-populated national parks into adjacent communal lands.

Zimbabwe benefits in many other ways from natural resource-based management not included in the above income calculations. The Zimbabwean government receives hunting license fees, which it uses to manage and conserve the nation's wildlife. There is also value-added revenue associated with processing plant and animal products accruing to individuals and businesses, such as wood and stone carving, wild fruit juice processing, honey gathering, leather work, and taxidermy. Finally, there is hotel, airline, and restaurant revenue associated with safari tourism in CAMPFIRE areas.

The status of the natural resources base in CAMPFIRE areas, which was characterized by rapid habitat loss and decreasing wildlife populations in 1989, has improved to the point where habitat loss is only moderate, and wildlife populations are stable and, in some cases such as elephants, increasing. Hunting quotas in CAMPFIRE areas are considered by most qualified observers to be conservative. For some species, quotas average about 2% of the current population size; other species, such as elephants, have even smaller quotas. The maintenance of trophy quality and overall wildlife numbers suggest that wildlife populations are being sustainably harvested under present conditions.

### **Issue 3. Alternatives to Trophy Hunting as a Means of Generating Income for CAMPFIRE Districts**

Since only about one-third of the CAMPFIRE Rural District Councils are in areas with abundant wildlife, developing alternatives to trophy hunting is essential to broadening the positive impact of CAMPFIRE. To enhance benefits accruing to its membership, the CAMPFIRE Association's long-term plan has identified five strategic thrusts of which one is "the diversification of CAMPFIRE principles to other resources in addition to wildlife." These activities may involve non-hunting wildlife activities, including eco-tourism and game ranching.

The expansion of the program beyond trophy hunting is far more difficult than the first phase; revenue from other sources is less certain, and markets need to be developed. It is essential to develop these markets to ensure that CAMPFIRE's benefits reach a broader segment of Zimbabweans, and to promote diversification of revenue producing activities for both individuals and resource management agencies.

CAMPFIRE's early success was founded upon an established international wildlife market, and early leaders were successful in helping Zimbabwe communities to link to this revenue stream - thereby benefiting not only their own socioeconomic development, but also leading to the sustainable management and successful conservation of wildlife resources - particularly the African elephant. Other natural resource uses, with the possible exception of the eco-tourism market, do not enjoy similar established markets.

Marketable non-wildlife resources in communal lands include timber, sand, granite, slate, woodland products such as wild fruits, bark, scenic sites, certain herbs, thatching grass, mopane worms, crafts and butterflies. Many marketable non-wildlife products are already subject to lively, informal sector entrepreneurial activity, much of which is unregulated and in some cases, unsustainable. The following sections summarize progress made in expanding CAMPFIRE to

alternative markets and products:

### **Wood and Mineral Products**

Of the non-wildlife marketable products on communal lands, timber remains under the control of government. The Forestry Commission has joined the CAMPFIRE Collaborative Group. Where natural forests exist, some microenterprises such as wood working, wood-based crafts, traditional medicines, mopane worm harvesting, honey production and gathering, and other non-wood forest products provide options for sustainable resource use and communal benefits.

Minerals (black granite, sand, slate, alluvial gold) are not renewable natural resources but represent resources which could be used slowly and prudently over time for a continuous stream of benefits.

### **Nature-based Tourism**

Some indigenous resources are very site-specific, such as scenic views, caves, ancient cave art, cultural tourism, rivers, ponds, lakes, dams and streams for fishing and rafting. These represent major resources at a village, village group or ward-level. Utilization of these resources will help communities develop microenterprises. When grouped at the ward or district level through cooperative ventures, there could be a role for shared marketing structures.

Some districts have eco-tourism/photo safari concessions with safari lodges near wildlife reserves located along their borders. In the Hwange district, for example, there has been a shift away from hunting to include eco-tourism. Zimbabwe and the wildlife/recreational experiences CAMPFIRE districts might offer have potential in terms of tourism. The first distributions from CAMPFIRE lease arrangements with major hotel operators is now underway. Cultural tourism, including development of archeological, historical and botanical sites and development of arts presentations, is a possibility but is less developed in Zimbabwe than other parts of Africa.

### **Other Resources**

Revenues deriving from non-hunting wildlife use are increasingly coming from tourism leases, and business ventures such as crocodile and ostrich farming and live animal sale. The diversification thrust is customer-oriented with the CAMPFIRE Association attempting to channel resource revenues, e.g. timber and minerals, to the local level. The Rural District Councils Act provides for devolution of authority for management of resources where Rural District Councils have demonstrated organizational and management capacity but those rights have not been extended presently beyond wildlife. Expanding this authority to cover other resources is essential to developing the potential for non-hunting options under CAMPFIRE.

### **Issue 4: Description of How Funds Made Available for CAMPFIRE in Fiscal Year 1998 Are to Be Used**

Congress appropriated \$2.9 million in FY 1998 funds for strengthening natural resources management for CAMPFIRE as the last increment against a planned \$20.5 million program for the 1995-2000 period.

It is planned that \$1.5 million in FY 1998 funds will be used for the CAMPFIRE Development Fund (CDF) which provides small grants to participating communities to establish income-generating, natural resource management activities. The Fund has been utilized by Rural District Councils for the following: technical support services; training and capacity building (including some staff and limited office/commodity support); resource management and infrastructure (waterholes, fences facilities); income-generating activities (eco-tourism venture development, handicraft development and marketing, mineral extraction, non-timber forest product harvesting, fisheries project development, wild fruit and other product processing, and game ranching ventures). The amounts and duration of individual grants will vary depending upon the type and magnitude of the activity, and the quality of the proposals.

In addition, \$1.4 million will be used to provide grants to governmental and non-governmental partners (e.g., the Forestry Commission, the Department of Natural Resources and SAFIRE) for the specific purpose of supporting ongoing efforts to diversify income generating activities for CAMPFIRE beneficiaries. Grants to CCG non-governmental members will be for training and technical support services to communities to build management capacity, and will include workshops, training events, technical studies, report publications, field operations support and equipment.

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